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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
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RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 0099
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9070
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 003109

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AUGUST 13 MFA PRESS BRIEFING: BUSH VISIT, DRUM TOWER
ATTACK, PROTESTS, PRESS FREEDOM, XINJIANG, SOUTH OSSETIA

11. Key points at the August 13 afternoon MFA press briefing were:

-- Asked to provide a reaction to President Bush's comments regarding religious freedom, the spokesman said that the Chinese government safeguards the rights of its citizens, including religious freedom.

-- China expressed its condolences to the families of U.S. citizens attacked at the Beijing Drum Tower and is currently carrying out an investigation of the incident.

-- The spokesman did not have any specific figures regarding the number of applications received to protest in Beijing "protest parks."

-- Regarding press freedom, local officials are trying to make the environment better for journalists to report, but journalists still need to "respect Chinese laws and law enforcement authorities."

-- All 56 ethnicities in China, including Uighurs, enjoy their rights as citizens as guaranteed by law. The relevant authorities in Xinjiang will crack down on the handful of forces trying to "create a rift between Han Chinese and ethnic minorities."

-- China is closely following developments in South Ossetia and hopes that the relevant parties begin a dialogue to "properly resolve their dispute peacefully."

President Bush's Visit to China

12. Asked to provide the Chinese reaction to President Bush's comments regarding religious freedom, MFA Spokesman Qin Gang said the Chinese government puts its "people first" and safeguards the rights of its citizens, including religious freedom. While there are differences between the United States and China regarding human rights and religious freedom, both sides are involved in dialogue to enhance mutual understanding of the issue.

Attack Against US Citizens at the Drum Tower

13. Asked what steps the Chinese government is taking regarding the attack against U.S. citizens at the Beijing Drum Tower, Qin said that China attaches great importance to the case and took immediate measures to rescue the wounded. China has provided information to the U.S. Embassy and local police are currently carrying out an investigation. Qin expressed condolences to the families of the victims and said the case will be handled according to the rule of law.

Protest Parks

14. Asked to provide the exact number of people who have applied to

protest in any of the three "protest parks" in Beijing, Qin said he does not have specific information or figures. Pressed to explain why at least three people have been detained after applying to protest, Qin said that China is a country under the rule of law and if one wants to demonstrate, they will have to go through the legal procedures to do so. People seeking to demonstrate must first "gain approval from the relevant authorities."

Revoked Visa for Former U.S. Olympian Joey Cheek

15. Asked to comment on Joey Cheek's recent visa revocation, Qin said that the authorization of visas is a "sovereign affair" of individual countries. Chinese visas are granted according to the relevant laws and regulations. China has made the appropriate arrangements to provide a safe and convenient environment for tourists coming to China. Pressed to explain whether China sees Cheek as a "threat to a safe and convenient environment," Qin said that the relevant authorities follow specific regulations to approve visa applications.

Press Freedom

16. Asked to comment on reports that local police have hindered journalists from reporting on the recent bombings in Xinjiang, particularly the reports of three Japanese journalists detained on Sunday, Qin said that the Chinese government has "adopted a positive attitude" toward journalists working in China. Regarding the Japanese journalists, Qin said they are concerned about the case and have contacted local officials. He asked for understanding from the journalists regarding the situation in Xinjiang. On the one hand,

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he said, local officials are "trying to make a better environment for your reporting" and on the other hand, "we hope while you are reporting you could respect Chinese laws and law enforcement authorities." Asked to explain why journalists are also having problems reporting freely in Beijing, Qin said that if journalists have encountered some problems or difficulties, the government is willing to help, but hopes that foreign correspondents follow and respect Chinese laws and regulations.

Demonstration near Olympic Village

17. Asked to confirm whether a U.S. group held a demonstration earlier today near the Olympic Village, Qin said he heard that several foreigners held demonstrations this morning and relevant authorities were handling the case. He reiterated that Chinese citizens and foreigners need to abide by Chinese laws and regulations regarding demonstrations and processions.

Chinese Dissidents Under House Arrest

18. Asked to explain why Chinese citizens with no history of violence have been placed under house arrest, Qin stated that the Chinese constitution guarantees Chinese citizens freedom, including free speech. All Chinese citizens enjoy their rights and freedoms according to the law. "No one is persecuted or under house arrest because of their speech," he said, "only those that break the law will be punished." When pressed to explain which laws the dissidents had violated, he said that China has "over 300 laws and regulations" and suggested that the journalist "read the relevant laws and regulations."

Activists Allege Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang

19. Asked to comment on allegations by activist groups that China is committing cultural genocide in Xinjiang Province, Qin stated that the allegations are not in line with the facts and are unacceptable. 56 ethnicities are represented in China and all Chinese citizens, including Uighurs, enjoy rights as guaranteed by law. An overwhelming majority of people in Xinjiang "support national

unification" and do not support "terrorism, extremism and separatism." A small handful of forces are trying to vilify China and "create a rift between Han Chinese and ethnic minorities;" the relevant authorities will crack down on these forces to safeguard national and social stability in Xinjiang.

East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)

¶10. Asked what specific threat the ETIM poses to China, Qin noted that East Turkestan forces have recently perpetrated a series of terrorist attacks, which have resulted in "great losses and property losses." The local police will crack down on these forces, and safeguard stability in Xinjiang. Asked whether the recent terrorist attacks are linked to ETIM, Qin said there is some evidence that there "might be" a connection between the attacks and ETIM. Relevant forces are investigating these links and details will be released at a later date.

Dalai Lama

¶11. Asked for the Chinese position on the Dalai Lama's recent offer to relinquish the demand for political autonomy in return for some concessions from the Chinese government, Qin stated that the Chinese policy on Tibet-related issues is clear and persistent. He noted that people "should not only see what he [the Dalai Lama] said, but see what he has done."

South Ossetia

¶12. Asked whether China will support a UN Security Council resolution calling for all parties in the South Ossetia conflict to cooperate, Qin stated that the Chinese government is closely following the developments in South Ossetia and hopes that the relevant parties begin a dialogue to "properly resolve their dispute peacefully" to restore peace and stability. Asked whether security had been stepped up at the Russian Embassy in Beijing after Georgian citizens held a protest there on August 11, Qin said that once the MFA received word that the protest was underway, they took measures to "guarantee the safety of the Embassy area" and persuaded the Georgian citizens to disperse.

Meeting Between the DPRK and Japan

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¶13. Asked to comment on a recent meeting between representatives of the DPRK and Japan in Shenyang, Qin said that the Chinese government had taken note of the meeting and welcomes the progress made in the dialogue between the DPRK and Japan. China supports continued consultation through bilateral and multilateral dialogue to implement the second phase of the Six-Party Talks.

Poisoned Dumplings in China

¶14. Asked to comment on reports that a poisoned dumpling case took place in China in mid-June, Qin confirmed that this was the case and that the Chinese government and public security officials are currently investigating the incident. Until the facts are collected, we "should not jump to any conclusions," he said. He hoped that Chinese consumers would view the case in a calm and objective manner and noted that China and Japan have reached a consensus and will work together on the investigation.

Musharraf Impeachment

¶15. Asked to comment on the Chinese position regarding the impeachment of Pakistani President Musharraf, Qin said he hoped the situation in Pakistan would remain stable and said he supported the efforts of the Pakistani Government and its people to safeguard national stability and development.

U.S. Citizen Attacks Chinese Taxi Driver?

¶16. Asked to comment on reports that a U.S. tourist attacked a Beijing taxi driver this morning, Qin said he had heard the report that a foreign visitor, "maybe American," had beaten up a Chinese taxi driver. He noted that this should be taken as an individual case and should not be connected to any conflict between the Chinese people and foreigners. The Public Security Bureau will handle the case properly according to the rule of law.

Foreign Leaders at the Olympic Opening Ceremony

¶17. Asked how many foreign leaders were in attendance at the Olympic Opening Ceremony, Qin said that altogether 84 accredited international dignitaries attended the event: 54 Heads of State; 16 Heads of Government; 9 High Representatives; 1 Regional Leader; and 4 First Ladies.

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